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ABSTRACT

This study examined the reactions of women who chose a traditional career (home economics) and women who chose a nontraditional career (journalism) five and ten years after graduation. The study included 171 home economics graduates and 75 journalism graduates. Of these, 36 were males and 210 females. Sixty-eight graduated in 1965 and 178 in 1969. No significant differences in job satisfaction were found according to college majors, sex, number of children or years since graduation. There was a significant difference between home economics and journalism graduates in assessing their progress toward career goals, favoring the journalism graduates. Journalism graduates were more likely to assess their progress more optimistically or pessimistically than home economics graduates. Respondents not having children were more likely to say that "pushing ahead" immediately was more important than those graduates with families. However, there was no significant difference on the answer of respondents with or without children to the question of the importance of "pushing ahead" ultimately. (TS)

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WORKING PAPER

CAREERS AS VIEWED BY FIVE AND TEN YEAR GRADUATES OF HOME ECONOMICS AND JOURNALISM PROGRAMS

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This is a working paper which examines career paths of women who chose a traditional field for women -- home economics, and women who entered a non-traditional field for women -- journalism. What are graduates of both programs reporting as problems they are encountering in their careers five years after graduation and ten years after graduation? Are these problems different in traditional and non-traditional areas? Are problems seen as basically matters of geography, gender, time or university preparation?

How satisfied are graduates with their jobs and their career progress? Is "career satisfaction" different for journalism and home economics graduates? Or, is satisfaction viewed as a consequence of gender, mobility, obligations to family, etc?

One hundred and seventy-one home economics graduates and 75 journalism graduates participated in the study, representing more than 80% of both populations. Of these, 68 were graduated in 1965 and 178 in 1969. The study included 36 males and 210 females. Graduates were asked to complete a mailed questionnaire. Many returned lengthy comments with letters.

About one-third (35%) of these graduates indicated their present jobs were "challenging." Two per cent classified their present jobs as "dismal." The job satisfaction mean was 7.7 -- (interesting = 7.0). The median was 8.1.

No significant differences in job satisfaction were found according to college majors, sex, number of children or years since graduation.

Comments from the graduates suggest that the job satisfaction data is more complex than a demographic explanation allows. The interview material is rich with suggestions of matters at issue here.

Strongly held views of the definition of careers appear in these comments. The homemaker role is well-defined and defended as a "satisfying" (O.K.) career.

> "My current job title includes wife, mother, homemaker, cook, maid and substitute teacher at the high school. My salary cannot be measured, it is the happiness from my children, the thrill of watching them develop and learn, the love of my husband and my name on the joint checking account."
>
> "Homemaker -- challenges unlimited, salary cannot be determined in dollar and cents -- satisfaction. Love of family and ability to help in activities and church and school worth more to me than a paycheck."
>
> "I love being home and would like to continue my career as a homemaker indefinitely."
>
> "I have no 'career goals' other than to be a good mother and wife."
>
> "You ask about career -- I am busy and capable and not a parasite -- but have not needed nor wanted to work outside the home."
>
> "Marriage has dented my professional career, but homelife is so important now that I feel I can forego my career for a few years for the benefit of bringing up well balanced (mental, physical, etc.) citizens. Our homelife is hindered by working especially now with the children. Happy homes develop happy people and that's what I'm after."
>
> "I think it is unrealistic to 'push ahead' in a career if one is also a mother of pre-school children. I am not prepared to turn over the rearing of my children to someone else at this time. I don't feel I can commit myself adequately to another career if I'm going to do the justice to the children I chose to love."

Other comments suggest ambivalence.

> "Tom and I were married two weeks after graduation and we live in a rural area -- 35 miles from any town. Consequently, I have never worked outside the home. I have not regretted this decision so far, but I realize if I were to become a widow my major would now be worthless since I have never worked."

> "The most important factor to me to consider right now is how would a career affect my family, especially my children. I do not feel that I could have a successful career and at the same time be fair to my family and their needs."

Table 1

	Home Economics	Journalism	Total
Behind expected	0	2	2
Much dissatisfied	6	1	7
Dissatisfied	11	3	14
OK	50	15	65
Satisfied	54	28	82
Very Satisfied	28	6	34
Further along than expected	9	12	21
	N= 158	N= 67	225
$x^2 = 18.04$	df = 1	sign. .01 level	

There was a significant difference between home economics and journalism graduates in assessing their progress toward career goals. The mean for home economics graduates (4.7) is slightly below "satisfied" while the mean of 5.0 for the journalism graduate is "satisfied."

Journalism students are more likely to assess their progress more optimistically or pessimistically than home economics graduates. Also, they are not as likely to say their progress is in the middle range (O.K.)

Pushing ahead right now is not significantly different for journalism and home economics majors, but significantly more of the 1969 graduates than 1965 are concerned with pushing ahead now. The question of pushing ahead ultimately is answered similarly by both groups.

Table 2

"Pushing Ahead" - Now	1965 Grads	1969 Grads	Total
No	47	99	146
Yes	7	52	59
Total	54	151	

Table 3

"Pushing Ahead" - Ultimately	1965 Grads	1969 Grads	Total
No	16	40	56
Yes	23	79	102
Undecided	11	24	35
Total	50	143	193

$x^2 = 1.36$ df = 2 sign. .50 level

Males are more likely to view "pushing ahead" now toward a career goal more important than females. No significant difference was reported to the question of the importance of pushing ahead toward career goals ultimately.

Table 4

"Getting Ahead" - Now	Male	Female
No	17	129
Yes	14	45
Total	31	174

N = 205 Chi sq. = 3.88 Sign. .05 level

Table 5

"Getting Ahead" - Ultimately	Male	Female
No	10	46
Yes	12	90
Undecided	4	31
Total	26	167

N = 193 Chi sq. = 1.30 Sign. .52 level

While some of the matters at issue in dealing with pushing ahead are obviously viewed as matters of mobility and flexibility or the lack of it, other factors are suggested in the shared introspection of graduates.

> "About a year ago, I realized that if I didn't start planning goals, I would be a secretary all my life and I hated secretarial work . . . It's hard to differentiate career and life goals at this point. Life goals - probably exceeding grasp, you never know."
>
> "I wish there wasn't so much guilt associated with women's heightened awareness of self."
>
> "It's important, particularly for a woman, to realize that people tend to define who they are by what they do."
>
> "One has to reevaluate periodically the responsibilities owed to family and to oneself. I'm more confident that I'm meeting the former than the latter. An important milestone for me was the discovery that one of the people I am is someone with some natural ability."

"My career goals at this time are being worked into some very deep personal feelings. I wouldn't be much of a person without my profession but by the same token I wouldn't get along very well without some very special friends."

"Even though I've been offered larger salaries with several 'big name' newspapers, I've learned that this isn't necessarily 'pushing ahead' with a career. Being in a liveable city with a satisfying job is more important to me now than money and other trappings."

"I know now by just looking at my experience of what comes easily to me and brings me the most rewards just where it is I eventually want to go. That makes all the rest of it simple and takes off all the pressure."

"We are more concerned with the quality of life than with upward mobility -- particularly rapid upward mobility. While we are not getting rich, there are fringe benefits here such as peace of mind, family life and job satisfaction which we would risk only under most unusual circumstances."

"You have asked me this question at a very bad time. I am now experiencing for the first time since leaving journalism school, the frustrations of getting restless. At times I find the job challenging and satisfying, but increasingly less so."

"In fact the task of getting back into my field after a nine year absence. I feel 'cautiously optimistic' in resuming my career -- a bit frightened after being away from it so long, yet determined to get back in there . . ."

"Also in my particular case, I have lost some of my alertness and my confidence so I would need, I feel, to return to some type of training ground -- educational or on the-job to regain skills."

"I actually got into my current position through a strange or unusual set of circumstances; one could say I have progressed quite rapidly. Since it has been very satisfying, I have put aside my original goal. However, it remains and is unmet. I feel the next year or two are critical in whether it ever will be met. The economy is playing havoc with career decisions right now."

Clues to special problems of flexibility and mobility in relation to children and geography are apparent in these comments.

"If most women are going to push ahead in a career, well-planned and staffed day care centers are a very necessary factor."

"Much of the behavior I see in children of which I disapprove is among those children whose mothers work all day."

"Flexibility and mobility -- you've got to go where the good jobs are."

"Getting away from Nebraska is the first step to getting ahead."

"The time structure, eight to five, used in business is designed for men. There will have to be more flexible hours if the potential for women in business is to be realized.

"To be perfectly frank, no kids is important to a woman who really wants a career and marriage."

"I feel confined and I feel I've lost contacts and information about job possibilities."

More than one-half of both 1969 and 1965 graduates resided in Nebraska at the time of the study. Significantly more home economics majors (104) than journalism majors (30) lived in Nebraska at the time of the study.

Table 6

Respondents' Location	Home Economics	Journalism	Total
Nebraska	104	30	134
All Others	67	45	112
Total	171	75	246

$x^2 = 8.29$ diff. = 1 sign. .001 level

Residing in the state does not appear to be a function of time out of school. About one-half of the 1965 graduates of UN-L and about one-half

of the 1969 graduates were residing in the state at the time of the study.

Table 7

Respondents' Location	Male	Female	Total
Nebraska	12	122	134
All others	24	88	112
Total	36	210	246

$x^2 = 4.31$ diff. = 1 sign. .04 level

Significantly more women (122) than men were residing in Nebraska at the time of the study.

Table 8

Respondents' Location	Children	No Children	Total
Nebraska	90	41	131
All others	58	48	106
Total	148	89	237

$x^2 = 4.31$ diff. = 1 sign. .04 level

More of the sample who resided in Nebraska were parents than those who lived outside the state.

To the question of the importance of "pushing ahead" right now --- respondents not having children are more likely to say that pushing ahead right now is more important than those graduates with families. However, there was no significant difference on the answer of respondents with or without children to the question of the importance of pushing ahead ultimately.

Table 9

"Pushing Ahead" - Now	Children	No Children	Total
No	95	44	139
Yes	27	31	58
Total	122	75	197

$x^2 = 7.34$ diff. = 1 sign. .007 level

Education has often been seen as a major method of accelerating upward mobility. It is important to note that in this study, significantly more men than women have completed graduate work.

Table 10	Male	Female
Graduate hours	4	17
Masters	8	36
Doctorate	3	1
Total	15	54

chi sq. = 7.09 sign. .03 level

Conclusions

The classification of journalism and home economics as non-traditional and traditional career areas for women was found to be not a productive distinction. Jobs held by graduates of each overlapped and spread much broader than most current career literature would suggest.

Graduate students appear to feel they encounter special problems with their careers and goals after both five and ten years of full-time employment. Questions about life goals arise.

One can speculate that the problems may be more intense, rather than different, for women. The strong questioning of one's self, one's goals, one's progress is evident everywhere in the graduates' comments, except in defense of the career of homemaking.

Similar but smaller scale samplings of 1965 and 1969 graduates of journalism and home economics programs are now under way at two other land grant universities. After that data has been studied and Q-statements selected, 1964 and 1968 graduates of these three universities will be asked to participate in a Q-study of perceptions of problems by these graduates of both journalism and home economics programs.